



SINGING WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT

April 2014

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:22-25

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Would you be able to sing while in prison and tied down? Would you be able to praise God in song while enduring such a trial? While in such pain and in such a place?

What a wonder that Paul and Silas were able to sing after having been beaten and locked up in what must have been a very dark cell! I wonder what kinds of hymns they were singing. And what did the songs of early Christians sound like anyway? I've often wondered. Have you?

But one thing's for sure, Paul and Silas were reported to be singing songs of praise. Probably quite joyfully. Probably quite loudly because the other prisoners were able to hear them.

Although the music and words to their songs would, of course, have been different from anything we sing today, I believe they would have expressed the same joy and confidence some of our songs do. Look at the popular worship song *Our God is Greater* by Chris Tomlin. If Paul lived today I could easily see his favourite words being:

*And if our God is for us, then who could ever stop us.
And if our God is with us, then what could stand against us.*

I love singing this song. But I'm not so sure I could sing it when I'm in a bad place, in trouble, in pain.

When I was young I used to love singing with my sister while we did the dishes. I don't have the lung capacity to do that anymore, quite possibly because I don't practice enough. At church, led by a worship team and surrounded by friends, I can manage. There my voice is safely hidden amongst the many others. Yes, I usually do sing at church, no matter what I'm going through, though away from church it's difficult. I expect it's like that for many.

Ask yourself these questions: Most of us can sing on Sunday; but can we sing on Monday? It's not hard to sing surrounded by others; but can we sing when we're alone? We can sing standing in the sanctuary, but can we sing out in the street as we're walking?

Can we, like Paul and Silas, sing God's praises with confidence and hope?

Personally—and maybe you can relate—there have been occasions when I was unhappy and not able to join in the singing at church. I just listened. Other times, songs brought tear-filled emotion, though I couldn't always tell whether it was from joy or sadness. Looking back, I can see that I felt close to God in the midst of those tears. Singing hymns and worship songs can do that to us.

I wish I could go back to the days when I was able to sing while washing dishes. I wish I could praise God in song at my home, as I do at church.

But I believe we *can* worship God at home. There are many good worship songs on YouTube that we can sing along with.

And I bet God will come close when we do . . .

Want to join me?

I wonder if you'd like the Chris Tomlin song I talked about. Want to check it out?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdFzB4MQgEA>

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